

# HEROIC COMMITMENT, OR THE DIALECTICS OF THE LEAP IN KIERKEGAARD, SARTRE, AND CAMUS

by Jerry L. Curtis

The concept of heroism in modern literature has caused no small stir of controversy among contemporary scholars.<sup>1</sup> Martin Turnell is convinced of a decline in heroism in modern times;<sup>2</sup> Raymond Giraud finds the modern hero incapable of true greatness;<sup>3</sup> Wallace Fowlie considers Proust's hero, Swann, the prototype of the modern hero of inaction;<sup>4</sup> Sean O'Faolain laments the disappearance of what he names the conceptual hero;<sup>5</sup> Victor Brombert views the modern hero as suffering from an intellectual paralysis brought on by the self-questioning lucidity that is the source both of man's pride and of his misery;<sup>6</sup> finally, according to Joseph Campbell, the hero is not a mere Janus, but a thousand-faced composite who is the sum total of us all.<sup>7</sup>

In answer to these critics—most of whom are obviously convinced that the modern hero is diminishing, vanishing, or somehow totally lacking in greatness—I submit that there *is* heroism in the concept of *engagement* as it appears in modern literature and literary criticism. Of course *l'engagement* is, admittedly, totally distinct from the concept of heroism which has prevailed in the Western tradition in general and in the literature inspired by Greece and Rome in particular. The tragic hero, as everyone knows, defied the inexorable whims of Fate and the provocative edicts of the gods—and this had a cathartic effect upon those who looked to the paragon for inspiration and example. The modern hero, however, is committed to a more subjective style of greatness. Not a slayer of monsters, nor a great conqueror, the hero we currently characterize as *engagé* represents an individual heroic attitude which, more often than not, we can neither wholly understand nor approve. As Eric Bentley has observed, "the word *heroism* does not mean just any sort of human goodness. It has reference to a philosophy of life."<sup>8</sup> Charles I. Glicksberg expressed much the same thinking when he stated that the crucial problem of the hero in much of contemporary fiction and drama expresses the fact

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that modern man "cannot live in the void; he must formulate some philosophy of courage, even if it is only the courage of despair, if he is to go on living."<sup>9</sup> This paper is an attempt to examine—on the basis of a dialectical investigation into the movements of specific heroes—three essential philosophical concepts of subjective, heroic commitment: Kierkegaard's religious thesis, Sartre's esthetic antithesis, and Camus's ethical synthesis.

It is in discussing the Biblical story of Abraham—in *Fear and Trembling*<sup>10</sup>—that Søren Kierkegaard speaks of his concept of heroic commitment. Focusing our attention on the horrifying predicament in which Abraham found himself because of his faith, the Danish philosopher scrutinizes the actions and adumbrates the qualities which constitute Abraham's greatness.

Abraham, Kierkegaard reminds us, had received in his youth God's promise that through his progeny all the nations of the earth would be blessed. God had led him away from the land of his fathers into a new, strange country where he had grown old in faithful expectation of the fulfillment of that promise. After seventy years of faithful anticipation, he still held to the belief—the preposterous belief—that he would have a son through whom God's promise would be accomplished. So what comfort it must have been to the old man to witness the birth of Isaac, what joy he must have known watching him grow and develop! Yet how overpowering must have been the dread, the distress, and the anguish concentrated into that one awful moment when Abraham heard the celestial voice commanding him to slaughter his own son and to burn his flesh on an altar: "Take Isaac, thine only son, whom thou lovest, and get thee to the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering upon the mountain which I will show thee" (*F/T* 27).<sup>11</sup>

Abraham's greatness, according to Kierkegaard, lies in the fact that he alone was able to assume the responsibility for responding to a command which clearly contains a divine paradox: He could not speak to any other human being about his situation. The relief of speech, Kierkegaard observes, is that it makes one part of the universal, leads one to the comfortable position of being understood by others (*F/T* 122–123). But who could understand Abraham? His situation, by its very nature, defied the understanding, since it exacted of him an oath of silence and because faith cannot be explained. The sacrifice of Isaac was manifestly an affair between Abraham and God wherein Abraham believed the voice he had heard to be that of God and felt that his duty toward God did not permit of mediation, but rather placed him in an absolute relation to the Absolute (*F/T* 80). In short, Abraham was unable to make himself intelligible to anyone because of his God-relationship. "In these regions," says Kierkegaard, "partnership is unthinkable" (*F/T* 82). Abraham was unable to speak, for he spoke "no human language" (*F/T* 123).

It is precisely by virtue of his silence that Abraham differs from the tragic

hero. Kierkegaard compares Abraham's individualistic commitment, based on faith, to the movements of Agamemnon. Agamemnon, it will be remembered, was compelled to sacrifice his daughter for very different reasons from those which induced Abraham to set out to sacrifice his son. The seer Calchas had announced that Agamemnon had offended the goddess Artemis, and that she had consequently sent adverse winds to hinder the Achaean invasion of Troy. Thus Agamemnon sacrificed Iphigenia as an act of expiation, to appease Artemis and thereby to assure the successful sailing of the Greek fleet to Troy, an act by which he was able to further the public good. Kierkegaard also compares Abraham's situation with that of Jephthah, the leader of the Jews, who immolated his daughter to assure the Israelite victory over the Ammonites. He finds that it resembles vaguely that of Brutus, who condemned his sons to a sacrificial death for their part in a conspiracy. But whereas Agamemnon, Jephthah, and Brutus clearly had moral grounds for sacrificing their own children, Abraham had none. None of the positions he occupied (father, head of a household, husband, etc.) involved duties which called for his killing Isaac.<sup>12</sup> Jean Wahl has rightly summarized Kierkegaard's discussion by stating that the tragic hero is "un personnage public" (a public individual) while Abraham represents "la vraie intériorité" (true inwardness).<sup>13</sup> The fundamental difference between the tragic hero and Abraham consists of the fact that the tragic hero remains within the realm of what society considers ethical, while Abraham does not. Chestov was thus justified when he observed that Abraham, ethically speaking, was an outlaw.<sup>14</sup> The tragic hero is therefore understood by all, while Abraham cannot explain his situation to anyone. Alienated, without connections or pretensions, divorced, as it were, from the world about him and bearing the dreadful burden of individual commitment, Abraham walks according to faith and in total silence, knowing that he cannot justify himself to any other human being.

Not only does Kierkegaard show that Abraham was unable to justify his behavior to other human beings, he also shows that he could not justify the sacrificing of Isaac, either rationally or ethically, even to himself. The ethical designation for what Abraham did is infanticide. According to God's own law, killing a human being was regarded as murder. This is the absurd predicament in which Abraham found himself because of his faith, and which Kierkegaard refers to as the "teleological suspension of the ethical." The predicament may be described by saying that Abraham's faith in God required of him that he suspend his own feelings and understanding as well as the ethical mode of existence to which he was accustomed. By virtue of his act of faith which overstepped the ethical, Abraham came to possess a higher *τέλος* outside of it, in relation to which the ethical could be suspended (*F/T* 69). Kierkegaard points out that the very nature of Abraham's heroism is that it depended upon the contradiction between his feelings and the act which he had to perform.<sup>15</sup> As Croxall puts it, only by faith was Abraham

"able to hold on to a position which to the intellect is absurd and to ethics abhorrent."<sup>16</sup>

Kierkegaard's concept of heroic commitment—that of Abraham, the "Knight of Faith"—is, for him, the highest development of man. The tragic hero, according to Kierkegaard, never achieves the greatness of the "Knight of Faith," but rather can be categorized into a lesser stage of development which he calls "infinite resignation." This means that the tragic hero accepts commitment to a given cause only when it can be translated into universal or ethical terms, whereas the "Knight of Faith" is the individual who lives within the realm of constant trial, of perpetual choice; that is, in the realm of terrible freedom (*F/T* 85–88). Abraham, as Kierkegaard's only example of the "Knight of Faith," makes two movements: First, he makes the movement of "infinite resignation" and gives up Isaac. He will resign himself to the infinite wisdom of God as shown by his willingness to murder his son; but in the next instant he makes the movement of faith when he says to himself: "But yet this will not come to pass, or if it does come to pass, then the Lord will give me a new Isaac, by virtue . . . of the absurd" (*F/T* 124). What the "Knight of Faith" exhibits, according to Kierkegaard, is "a new creation by virtue of the absurd" (*F/T* 51), by resigning everything infinitely and then grasping everything again by virtue of the absurd. It is this illogical expectation on the part of Abraham which Kierkegaard calls the "movement of the absurd" (*F/T* 110), or the leap of faith.

Since any truth, in Kierkegaard's view, is objectively uncertain, there is great risk involved in personal commitment.<sup>17</sup> Thus while other heroes resign themselves to the comfort and security of objective certainties—Ethics and Reason—Kierkegaard's hero of *l'engagement* demonstrates the notion that truth cannot be known objectively, it can only be lived.<sup>18</sup>

Abraham is not a hero we can emulate, an example for us to follow. Kierkegaard indicates precisely that we can only approach him with a *horror religiosus* (*F/T* 71). We must not see him as a religious paradigm or *type* of hero according to which all "leaps of faith" are to be declined.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, Kierkegaard maintains in his *Postscript* that "the religious paradigm is an irregularity."<sup>20</sup> Thus Abraham is, if anything, an anti-hero: He was, in Kierkegaard's mind, "great by reason of his power whose wisdom is impotence, great by reason of his wisdom whose secret is foolishness, great by reason of his hope whose form is madness, great by virtue of his love which is hatred of oneself" (*F/T* 31).<sup>21</sup> His greatness lies in his being the unethical, irrational, subjective, silent, inimitable individual.

In *L'Existentialisme est un Humanisme*,<sup>22</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre summarily defines his concept of commitment as "*l'engagement libre*," a definition which is itself a contradiction of terms. It is by virtue of this so-called "free commitment," however, that the Sartrean hero assumes his identity and becomes, even if only temporarily, a type of humanity. For Sartre, there is

absolutely no difference between *free* being, planned or projected being (as existence choosing its essence), or absolute being. "What people want," he maintains, "is to be born heroes or cowards."<sup>23</sup> But according to Sartre, a man must *become* a coward or hero and can do so only through personal commitment which—like the individualistic "leap of faith" of Kierkegaard's Abraham—must remain a very subjective existential venture.

Although it may be argued that the more salient examples of the Sartrean *héros engagé* are Orestes, hero of *Les Mouches* (1943), or Mathieu of Sartre's trilogy *Les Chemins de la Liberté*, one can find, I believe, all the basic characteristics of the Sartrean hero in Antoine Roquentin—protagonist of Sartre's first published novel, *La Nausée*.<sup>24</sup>

*La Nausée* is the first-person account of Sartre's hero, of whom the fictional "editors" tell us only this: "Antoine Roquentin, after travelling through Central Europe, North Africa and the Far East, settled in Bouville for three years to conclude his historical research on the Marquis de Rollebon (Editors' Note)." We are informed later that Sartre's would-be biographer is thirty years old, and that he lives alone on a modest, but sufficient, income which allows him to pursue his research (*Nausée* 241–242). Roquentin's journals tell us of his awakening to the contingency of being, to the absurdity of his existence. Sartre's own *Gautama*, Roquentin is illuminated as he sits at the foot of an enormous tree. There, he is prompted to develop a rather ingenious concept of *l'engagement*.

Roquentin's vision comes about in the course of his observing the man-defined universe about him. He discovers, for example, that the nomenclature, diversity, and classifications imposed upon things by man are but an appearance, a coat of varnish, which, when peeled off, bares the underlying chaos of existence. The now-famous chestnut-tree vision reveals to him the chaotic proliferation of an un-named world hidden by the veil of habit and abstract categories. The world—his world—henceforth needs re-definition, for the habitual relationship of man and the world has been shattered. Objects refuse to be fitted into established human definitions. They tend to overflow man-made categories. As Roquentin comes to this realization, he experiences nausea.

Sartre's hero eventually comes to the realization that his attacks of nausea do not represent a sickness, but rather a heightened, dreadful awareness—a metaphysical trouble or *ennui* (*Nausée* 151). Roquentin struggles to free himself from the web of fantasy in which others are caught, in an attempt to escape his nausea. Besides rejecting the traditional definitions of things, he becomes aware of the impact of inter-subjectivity upon his own life-style. Here Sartre marks clearly the utter ridiculousness of complying with a phantasmagorical order and attempts to enumerate the practices his hero must avoid in order to avoid bad faith and attain authenticity. Roquentin decries, for instance, man's dependence upon the image others have of him. In the



poetic crossfire of gazes, man's world may well become a world of labels, and life a stage where each man assumes his separate role in a collective comedy of errors. In each human case, once the label has been applied and assumed, the Word becomes flesh and dwells among us and, like the Biblical, anthropomorphized Word, saves us from our sins, that is, from our *selves*. Roquentin's introspection finally leads him to believe that he has an identity quite distinct from that imposed upon him by others: his body and thought are not separate, not a duality, but rather one entity. He is a viscous, contingent, thinking thing.

As the shattering reality of the groundlessness for human existence becomes more and more apparent to him, Roquentin becomes aware of himself as consciousness-in-the-world by bearing witness to the contingency of the world through language. Thus Roquentin has been likened to Nietzsche's Dionysiac man who, having torn asunder the veil of Maya and looked into the true nature of things, is both enlightened and paralyzed by what he sees.<sup>25</sup> Hence Roquentin's struggle to understand himself and to achieve authenticity in a world void of meaning leads him to strive to redefine the world *for himself*. This existential image of man as consciousness in and of the world corresponds to the Sartrean definition of commitment alluded to earlier: *l'engagement libre*. "I am free," Roquentin tells us. "I have no reason for living" (*Nausée* 219). Yet Sartre's author-hero reasons that he might justify his own existence somehow by writing a novel of which his own life is the substance. Of course he does not envision a traditional use of language as labels, clichés, and so forth, for these have duped him in the past. He wishes to use words, not as objects, but as signs. In freeing himself from illusion, Roquentin learns to use language as a tool for his own conscious appraisal of, and commitment to, the world. Aided by a deep sense of language as communication rather than ritual, he hopes to become like an untouchable refrain of music, an authentic, pitiless witness to his own metamorphosis from complacency to awareness (*Nausée* 59, 181, 188, 244).

It would have to be a book: I don't know how to do anything else. But not a history book: history talks about what has existed—an existent can never justify the existence of another existent. I erred in wanting to resurrect the Marquis de Rollebon. Another type of book. I don't quite know which kind—but you would have to perceive, behind the printed words, behind the pages, something which would not exist, which would be *above* existence. . . . It would have to be beautiful and hard as steel and make people ashamed of their existence. (*Nausée* 248–249)

The hero of *La Nausée* is committed, then, in that he fancies himself to be an esthetician with a mission: through language he will become a witness to the inauthenticity of others and thereby make them ashamed of their existence. Thus while the heroes of *Les Chemins de la Liberté* may seem more *engagés*—at least politically—it seems to me that Sartre has never been able to abandon totally the moralistic esthetics of Roquentin.

Of course one would be as hard-pressed to define Sartrean morality as Sartre is himself.<sup>26</sup> Writing and observing, however, have forever been his fundamental manifestation of commitment. Thus Camus was perhaps quite accurate when, in reviewing *La Nausée* in *L'Alger républicain* on October 20, 1938, he reduced Sartre's thinking to the following cogito: "J'écris, donc je suis" ("I write, therefore I am"). However justified or unjustified one may find Camus's early appraisal of Sartrean heroism, time bears witness to the fact that Sartre has clearly taken the "leap of esthetics," seemingly refusing every other binding commitment which has threatened to thwart the freedom of the esthetician. Editor of *Les Temps Modernes* since 1946 and more recently Director of a Maoist newspaper published in Paris, Sartre has consistently exercised, and will likely continue to exercise, the commitment to art first foreshadowed by the hero of *La Nausée*.

Both Kierkegaard and Sartre had a formative effect on Camus as he developed his own concepts of the absurdity of the human condition and the ways of living it permitted. On one hand Camus opposed (yet still became imbued with) the thinking of Kierkegaard, whom he quite justifiably considered to be the father of modern existentialism and the most formidable advocate of Christian Existentialism. On the other hand, it was Camus's own contemporary, compatriot and fellow-artist, Jean-Paul Sartre—leading exponent of coeval existentialism and, in particular, of Atheistic Existentialism—with whom he found himself, and his ideas on heroism, in conflict. Camus's concept of commitment occupies a position which can be described, with regard to the antipodes of Christian and Atheistic Existentialism, as equatorial.

Unlike Kierkegaard's Abraham and Sartre's Roquentin, Camus's fictional embodiment of *l'engagement* is concerned with the very difficult task of accepting absurdity as a fundamental imbalance inherent in the human condition. Camus is convinced that there is an abyss between the knowledge he acquires concerning his existence and the practical application of that knowledge which can never be spanned.<sup>27</sup> Because he sees an image of this absurd imbalance in the predicament of the legendary Sisyphus, Camus reconstructs the myth of Sisyphus and derives therefrom his concept of heroism.

For Camus, Sisyphus displays the philosophical attitude of the individual integrated into the world we know now and here. In this world of the present, Camus's hero finds a measure of plenitude. Although condemned to Hades, a prisoner of the gods and destined to the futile task of forever pushing the same boulder up the same mountain trail, Sisyphus (we are told) is happy (*Mythe* 198). Sisyphus represents, for Camus, a superior form of commitment: He denies the gods, yet follows their absurd decrees. Clearly this is an image of the human condition. The formula of this hero—a shibboleth which manifests an attitude of plenitude or "this-worldliness"—is "Tout est bien," or "All is well" (*Mythe* 198). Thus for Camus, commitment means daily re-integra-

tion into the absurdity of daily existence, absurdity itself being an integral, inescapable part of the human predicament. Sisyphus is great because he, having recognized this, is at once without hope *and* happy.

Camus believed that the hero of Søren Kierkegaard—Abraham, the “Knight of Faith”—expresses an attitude of faith, not in the world we know, but in the unknown realm of God. For Camus, such faith denotes a dangerous antipathy to satisfaction and finality, a belief that anything genuinely real or truly good cannot be achieved within the sphere of man’s natural life or within the repertory of ordinary human experience. According to Camus, Abraham had faith, not in the world, but rather in the God who promised to rectify the world. Moreover, in consenting to murder his own son for “other-worldly” values, Abraham was compelled to abdicate human values (ethics, reason). Camus is convinced that all the effort of Kierkegaard’s intelligence is directed “towards escaping the antinomy of the human condition” (*Mythe* 126). Abraham’s “leap of faith,” according to Camus, is suicidal, both in terms of philosophy and of commitment or heroism (*Mythe* 128).

No less evasive, according to Camus, is the position of Sartre’s hero of *La Nausée*. Camus’s criticism of Roquentin deals with two points which are fundamental in the novel, namely: (1) As a result of Roquentin’s vision of the contingency of being he arrives at the conclusion that he is totally free (*Nausée* 219). Recognizing his new-found freedom, Sartre’s hero launches an attack on the ideas of the inhabitants of Bouville. Unlike Roquentin, the Bouvillians rely on the fixed and immutable laws of nature to regulate their lives, laws from which Roquentin’s illumination exempts him. (2) Yet after having condemned others for slipping into convention and habit in order to mask their existence, Roquentin adopts for himself a position of hope which Camus likens to faith: by writing a novel, in which he would relate his own experience of life’s absurdity, Roquentin *hopes* to be delivered from nausea and to justify his own existence. For Camus, consciousness of the absurdity of one’s predicament does not warrant either faith or the belief in absolute freedom, nor does it imply the saving power of writing fiction.

In an interview which took place in 1945, Camus rather simply categorized existentialists into two camps—Christian Existentialists, such as Kierkegaard and Jaspers, and Atheistic or Nihilistic Existentialists such as Husserl, Heidegger, and Sartre—and stated his own position with regard to these two camps: “I believe that there must be a tolerable truth between the two.”<sup>28</sup> While he readily admits that some of his ideas may be found in existential analyses, Camus claims that the existentialists “deify that which crushes them and search—even in that which degrades them—for something in which to place their hope” (*Mythe* 122). He considers such totemism, whether it take the form of religious or of esthetic commitment, an escape from the fundamental absurdity of the human condition.

It should now be clear to the reader that the philosophical concepts of



Kierkegaard, Sartre, and Camus regarding heroic commitment are inter-related. Faced with the dreadful chasm of absurdity, the three heroes discussed here react in conflicting ways: Abraham reacts through the "leap of faith"; Roquentin reacts through the evasive "leap of freedom and esthetics"; and between them, Sisyphus re-integrates himself into the very absurdity from which both Abraham and Roquentin seek to escape. For as the boulder of Sisyphus rolls down the infernal slopes, Camus's hero pauses and, rising to his full stature, returns erect to his awful burden below.

In the context of twentieth-century thought, where the annihilation of the human family by man-made devices is no longer an academic fantasy, Camus's concept of commitment may well hold the key to the survival and destiny of man. Kierkegaard admitted that Abraham was the only example of the "Knight of Faith" he had ever encountered in history; Sartre's *Chemins de la Liberté* (*Pathways to Freedom*) lead to an impasse; but the greatness described by Camus, accessible to every man, is, at base, the realization that man is a relative creature, that his freedom is limited and his logic finite. It is my feeling that Camus aimed at formulating a positive response to life—that of the *héros absurde*—as a reaction to the tenets of Christian and Atheistic Existentialism he discerned in his own time. His absurd hero, Sisyphus, recognizes the limitations of his absurd situation and, within those limitations, attempts to find happiness. Such a modest approach to commitment suggests that we should live for a cause, not die for it; that we look, but not leap.<sup>29</sup>

## NOTES

1. Edith Kern, "The Modern Hero: Phoenix or Ashes?" *Comparative Literature*, X (Fall 1958), calls attention to this controversy and lists, with great acumen, the views of critics whom I mention here only in passing.

2. Martin Turnell, *The Novel in France* (New York: Random House, 1951).

3. Raymond Giraud, *The Unheroic Hero* (New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press, 1957).

4. Wallace Fowlie, "Swann and Hamlet: A Note on the Contemporary Hero," *Partisan Review*, IX (1942), 195-202.

5. Sean O'Faolain, *The Vanishing Hero* (London, 1956).

6. Victor Brombert, *The Intellectual Hero* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), p. 220.

7. Joseph Campbell, *Hero With A Thousand Faces* (New York: World Publishing Company, 1970), p. 391.

8. Eric Bentley, *A Century of Hero Worship* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), p. 2.

9. Charles I. Glicksberg, "The Literature of Absurdity," *Western Humanities Review*, XII (Winter 1958), 29.

10. Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, trans. Walter Lowrie, Anchor Books edition (New York: Doubleday, 1954); subsequent references will appear in the text as *F/T*.

11. Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'Existentialisme est un Humanisme* (Paris: Nagel, 1965), p. 30, is bewildered by the faith of Abraham: "What proof did he (Abraham) have, in fact, that this was God? If an angel comes to me, how can I know that it is an angel? And if I hear voices, what proves that they come from Heaven rather than Hell, or from my subconscious or from my pathological state of mind?"

12. James Bogen, "Kierkegaard and the 'Teleological Suspension of the Ethical,'" *Inquiry*, V (Winter 1962), 305-317, makes this point.

13. Jean Wahl, *Etudes kierkegaardiennes* (Paris: Aubier, 1938), p. 192.

14. Leon Chestov, *Kierkegaard et la philosophie existentielle*, trans. T. Ragoet and B. de Schloezer (Paris: Librairie J. Vrin, 1936), p. 77.

15. Otherwise his faith would have been, as Walter Kaufmann claims, a sort of blind authoritarianism. *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*, Meridian Books edition (New York: World Publishing Co., 1966), p. 18.

16. T. H. Croxall, *Kierkegaard Commentary* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956), p. 150.

17. Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, trans. David F. Swenson and Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941), p. 182.

18. George B. Arbaugh and George E. Arbaugh, *Kierkegaard's Authorship* (Illinois: Augustana College Library, 1967), p. 396.

19. This view is not shared by Louis H. Mackey, who asserts that Kierkegaard regards Abraham as a paradigm for the life of faith. "Kierkegaard's Lyric of Faith: A Look at *Fear and Trembling*," *Rice Institute Pamphlet*, XLVII (July 1960), 30; cf. 38.

20. *Postscript*, pp. 231, 235; cf. Søren Kierkegaard's *Papirer*, ed. P.A. Heiberg, V. Kuhr, and E. Torsting, I-XI<sup>e</sup> (20 vols.), (Copenhagen: Glydendal, 1909-1948), XI<sup>e</sup> A 66.

21. "I might be tempted to call myself *tortor heroum*," Kierkegaard admits in *Fear and Trembling* (p. 119), "for I am very inventive when it is a question of putting heroes to the torture."

22. *L'Existentialisme est un Humanisme*, p. 71.

23. *Ibid.*, pp. 60-61.

24. Jean-Paul Sartre, *La Nausée* (Paris: Gallimard, 1938). Translations my own; referred to hereafter in the text as *Nausée*.

25. Edith Kern, *Existential Thought and Fictional Technique: Kierkegaard, Sartre, Beckett* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1970), p. 95.

26. For Sartre has never fulfilled that promise stated on the concluding page of *L'Être et le Néant* (Paris: Gallimard, 1943) to provide us with an ethical application of his ideas.

27. Albert Camus, *Le Mythe de Sisyphe*, in *Essais*, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 1967), p. 111; referred to hereafter in the text as *Mythe*.

28. "Interview à *Servir*," *Servir*, le 20 décembre 1945.

29. For a more thorough study of this question see Jerry L. Curtis, "Camus' Absurd Hero," unpublished dissertation (U. of Washington, 1970); abstracted in *Dissertation Abstracts*, XXXII, No. 1, 1971, pp. 422-423A.